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ABSTRACT

The report examines and documents the part played by certain local and regional committees in the operation of the Priority Country Area Program (PCAP) in South-West and Central Queensland prior to 1980. Two original studies are described: one concerned with the Local Advisory Committees (LACs) in South-West Priority Country Area and the other with the Regional Committee, operating in the Central Priority Country Area. Because the studies were conducted independently and there were differences of methodology and approach, separate descriptions of the topics have been retained in the appropriate sections of the report. The last section compares findings presented in the two reports and examines subsequent developments in PCAP committee structures. Additionally, this last section locates the origins of PCAP committee structure within the context of the overall development of the program. Principal findings relating to the Central Regional Committee, LACs, and general areas include: The Central Regional Committee model was judged relatively successful by the majority of informants; LACs saw a lack of status and cohesion, breakdowns in contact and communication with the State Committee; and during 1978 and 1979, submissions from LACs and Central Regional Committee accounted for approximately 30% of the total expenditure on new submissions. (Author/AH)

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PRIORITY COUNTRY AREA PROGRAM EVALUATION SERIES: OCCASIONAL PAPER

Local and Regional Committees of the Priority Country Area Program prior to 1980

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September 1981

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SUMMARY

1. Scope of this report

(a) This report examines the role of Priority Country Area Program (PCAP) local and regional committees in South-West and Central Queensland prior to 1980, with particular reference to:

- origins and purposes of the committees;
- membership and organisation; and
- operations and impact on the program.

(b) Information for this report was obtained principally from:

- discussions with members of PCAP committees and PCAP staff;
- a survey of Local Advisory Committees;
- participant observation; and
- analysis of PCAP records.

2. Principal findings

(a) Relating to the Central Regional Committee:

- the Central Regional Committee model was judged relatively successful by the majority of informants;
- the key role of Area (Community) Representatives and the Regional Co-ordinator was demonstrated;
- the value of involving senior educationists in decision making at the regional level was recognised; and
- the resistance to change present in established systems has implications for innovative programs such as PCAP.

(b) Relating to Local Advisory Committees (LACs):

- major problems included a lack of status and cohesion, breakdowns in contact and communication with the State Committee, and difficulty in establishing mutually acceptable role definitions;
- there existed a demand for LAC representation upon the South-West Regional Committee; and
- the potential of LACs to contribute to the evaluation program was recognised.

(c) General:

- prior to 1980, the number of successful submissions from the Central Regional Committee was approximately equal to the combined total of successful submissions from LACs in the South-West and the resulting expenditure was also almost equally divided between the two regions;
- during 1978 and 1979, submissions from LACs and Central Regional Committee accounted for approximately 30 per cent of the total expenditure on new submissions;
- the increased regional autonomy, following the re-organisation of PCAP committee structures during 1980, appears to have been well received; and
- the provision for LAC representation on the South-West Regional Committee appears to have enhanced their role.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this report

1.1.1 This report examines and documents the part played by certain local and regional committees in the operation of the Priority Country Area Program (PCAP) in South-West and Central Queensland prior to 1980. It had its origins in a study of those committees, completed early in 1980 at the request of the PCAP State Committee.

1.1.2 At that time, the State Committee had to decide on the most appropriate type of committee system to introduce in the newly declared North-West Priority Country Area, and how to incorporate existing committees into the resulting organisational structure. The decision to adopt a regional pattern resulted in a structure combining three regional committees, representing a wide range of educational interests, with a small State Management Committee responsible for overall co-ordination of the program (see paragraph 1.3.8).

1.1.3 At the time of writing (September 1981), it is possible that an evaluation of PCAP's new organisational structure may be commenced shortly. Thus, in addition to documenting PCAP committee development prior to 1980, it is also envisaged that this report could provide useful background information for that study.

1.2 The content of this report

1.2.1 As a result of the studies mentioned in paragraph 1.1.1 above, two informal reports were produced. One was concerned with the Local Advisory Committees (LACs) in the South-West Priority Country Area and the other with the Regional Committee which had been operating in the Central Priority Country Area. Those informal reports form the bases of Sections 2 and 3 of this report.

1.2.2 Because the original studies were conducted independently and there were differences of methodology and approach, separate descriptions of those topics have been retained in the appropriate sections of the present report.

1.2.3 Finally, in Section 4 an attempt is made to compare certain findings presented in the two preceding sections and to briefly examine subsequent developments in PCAP committee structures.

1.2.4 The remainder of this section locates the origins of PCAP committee structure within the context of the overall development of the program.

1.3 The origins of PCAP and of PCAP committee structures

1.3.1 In its 1977-79 report, the Schools Commission suggested *'that students in country areas may be disadvantaged compared to urban dwellers because of additional factors in the variety of experiences and opportunities available to such students'*. As a consequence of this concern for the problems of country children, the Commission added a new element to the Disadvantaged Schools Program for 1977, sub-titled 'Disadvantaged Country Areas'. The funding thus made available was intended to finance the piloting of schemes designed to improve the opportunities of children in such areas. From the information collected about the pilot schemes initiated in each State, it is hoped that strategies for improving educational services in all country areas will be devised.

1.3.2 In Queensland, the term 'priority country area' is used to describe those country areas which have been identified on the basis of guidelines supplied by the Schools Commission, and approved by the Commonwealth Minister for Education on the recommendation of the State Minister for Education. To date, three such areas have been declared - one in the south-west of Queensland, one in central Queensland and one in the north-west of Queensland. Map 1 shows the location and extent of these three areas.

1.3.3 Early in 1977, a committee representing State and non-State educational interests was formed by the State Minister for Education to administer the Priority Country Area Program in Queensland. A description of the formation of that Committee appeared in the first PCAP Annual Report, that for 1977, and for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with the early history of PCAP, the relevant section is reproduced in Appendix A. This Joint Committee continued, virtually unchanged, until the re-organisation of PCAP at the beginning of 1980. During the three years of the original Committee's existence, PCAP was funded to the extent of approximately $1 million a year by the Schools Commission, and at the end of 1979 was responsible for over twenty separate projects and employed more than 30 full-time staff.

1.3.4 From the first, a major responsibility of the Joint Committee was that of advising on the disbursement of funds. In the PCAP Annual Report for 1977, the handling of submissions for funding was described as follows:

"Submissions seeking funding from Priority Country Area Program funds are received by the Committee from individual committee members, from Departmental divisions and non-Departmental organisations and bodies, and from local groups such as teachers and community organisations. All submissions are discussed at Committee meetings.

Recommendations are then made to the appropriate Departmental officer and approval is sought for the disbursement of funds to the proposed project. The Chairman of the Committee has authority to approve expenditure on projects up to $3000. In many cases, because of the level of expenditure required on particular projects it has been necessary to seek Cabinet approval. In most cases, the required approvals have been forthcoming with a minimum of delay.".

The retention of centralised control over PCAP funds may be noted.

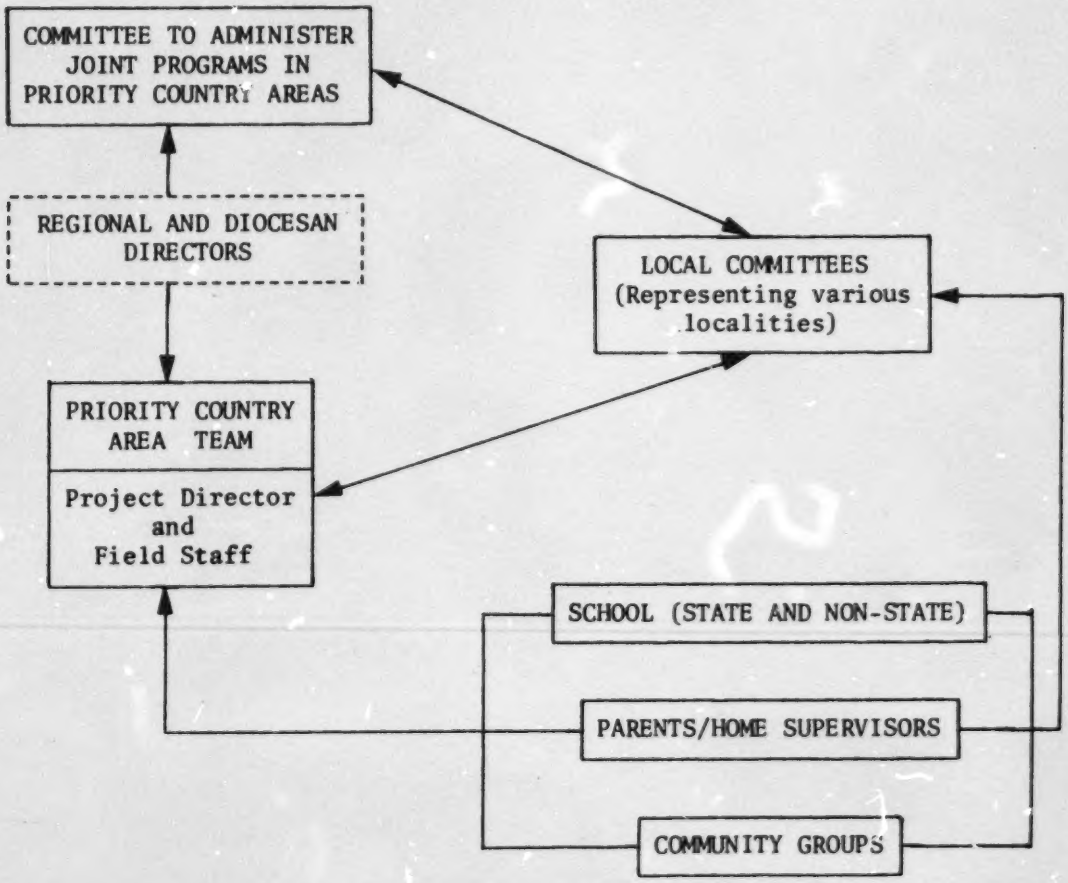
In this connection, it has been suggested that, because each PCAP initiative has normally to receive Departmental approval prior to implementation, the possibility of Departmental support at a later date may be enhanced.

1.3.5 During the months following the declaration of the South-West Priority Country Area in March 1977, six Local Advisory Committees were established at centres throughout the area. In setting up these committees, an attempt was made to ensure that they were representative of the communities they would serve. It was intended that their functions would include:

- proposing initiatives to the Priority Country Area (PCA) Committee;
- commenting on initiatives proposed to the Committee from other sources;
- encouraging local involvement in the PCA program and ensuring that information on initiatives was disseminated within the community;
- advising the Committee on ways of ensuring that maximum benefit was being derived from initiatives taken; and
- participating in a local information network involving all local committees, the project team, regional office and Joint Committee.

The organisational structure of PCAP at the end of 1977 is encapsulated in Figure 1 (see also paragraphs 3.3.4 and 3.5.1 in Section 3).

Figure 1: The organisational pattern of the South-West Priority Country Area


COMMITTEE TO ADMINISTER JOINT PROGRAMS IN PRIORITY COUNTRY AREAS
REGIONAL AND DIOCESAN DIRECTORS
LOCAL COMMITTEES (Representing various localities)
PRIORITY COUNTRY AREA TEAM
Project Director and Field Staff
SCHOOL (STATE AND NON-STATE)
PARENTS/HOME SUPERVISORS
COMMUNITY GROUPS

1.3.7 Following the declaration of the Central Priority Country Area late in 1977, the PCAP Central Regional Committee was formed early in 1978. The formation of this Committee is considered in more detail in the next section of this report.

1.3.8 The year 1980 commenced with the declaration of an additional area, the North-West Priority Country Area, and the subsequent re-organisation of the PCAP committee structure. The new structure provided for a smaller State Management Committee, composed of representatives from the State and Catholic education systems, and larger Regional Committees in each of the Priority Areas. Membership of the latter committees provides representation for the State and non-State education systems as well as for a variety of community interests and organisations. Under the new Ministerial guidelines, each Regional Committee is chaired by either the Regional or the Diocesan Director of Education, and each chairman is an ex-officio member of the State Management Committee.

1.3.9 The background information supplied above is intended to help in locating the local and regional committees within the overall context of PCAP organisation. Similarly, the latter organisation needs to be viewed from the perspective of its position within the Queensland educational system, since the clarification of its relationships with other components of that system, such as the Department of Education, has been a major influence on the program's development.

SECTION 2: THE CENTRAL REGIONAL COMMITTEE PRIOR TO 1980

2.1 The methods and approach used in the study

2.1.1 The overall approach to the study was strongly influenced by the limited time available (see paragraphs 1.1.1 and 1.1.2). Consequently, a relatively simple evaluation plan was adopted, which sought answers to the following questions:

(a) What were the origins and initial purpose of the Committee?
(b) What membership and organisational structures evolved?
(c) How did the role of the Committee develop in practice?
(d) What processes and procedures were followed in developing the Committee's role?
(e) How effective did those involved judge the Committee to have been?
(f) How was PCAP re-organisation expected to affect the future operation of the Committee?

2.1.2 Information for this study was collected in the following ways:

- interviews with past and present members of the Central Regional Committee and other PCAP committees;
- telephone conversations with Area Representatives;
- discussions with the Co-ordinator (Central Region) and other PCAP personnel;
- perusal of PCAP files; and
- participant observation of meetings of the Central Regional Committee.

2.1.3 It is important that the limitations of the data base be clearly appreciated by readers of this report. Because of the limited time available, the study relied heavily upon the perceptions of Central Regional Committee members, and others associated with PCAP, who could be readily contacted in person, or by telephone. There was, for instance, no attempt to sample the opinions of community members, teachers or others, at the 'grass roots' level within the Central Priority Country Area, although many such persons could be seen as having an interest in the program and an important viewpoint to contribute.

2.1.4 At the same time, although the approach adopted was, on this occasion, dictated by expediency, it is nonetheless susceptible to theoretical justification. Working within the ethnographic research paradigm, authors such as Mohle (1978) have argued that, in the study of group behaviour, *'the knowledge of reality that members hold can be regarded as a valid partial reconstruction of the culture of the group'*. It follows that, in the study of an artificial primary group (cf. Sprott 1958) such as a committee, the perceptions of individual participants may be regarded as one perspective from which a valid reconstruction of the group's activities and intentions can be developed.

2.1.5 As a guiding principle, the writer endeavoured to present the judgements of others, whilst trying to avoid passing judgement upon the main issues himself. Decisions concerning the collection and presentation of information were, however, necessarily dependent on the writer's personal judgement. Because such decisions can never be entirely value free, it is necessary for the writer to state his own position and, in this instance, to own his allegiance to the neo-phenomenological tradition in psychological research (cf. Kelly 1955). Bassis, Chittenden and Amarel (1976) offered the following description of that tradition:

"The neo-phenomenological tradition in psychology is characterised, first of all, by an assumption that no one can experience a reality that is interpretation-free. We can only make assumptions about reality, construing and interpreting it in terms derived from our individual past histories."

Secondly, the writer adheres to the symbolic interactionist dictum that *"if men define their situations as real, they are real in their consequences"* (cf. Hartley 1978).

2.1.6 At appropriate points, the study draws upon the arguments of social psychologists such as Katz and Kahn (1966), who view organisations as *"open systems"* concerned with the processes of *"input"*, *"throughout"* and *"output"*, and with dynamic interactions rather than stable relationships.

2.2 Origins and initial purposes of the Committee

2.2.1 Prior to the declaration of the Central Priority Country Area (see Map 2) late in 1977, a number of meetings and discussions were initiated by the PCAP State Committee to consider suitable projects for the new area. Involved in those meetings, which took place in Rockhampton and a number of other centres throughout the region, were representatives of local community interests and State and non-State education authorities. An important outcome of the deliberations was the formation of an interim 'Education Committee', consisting of three professional educationists and three community representatives, which successfully organised the first 'Summer School' in December 1977.

2.2.2 Several informants considered that a variety of pressures from within the area had assisted in drawing the attention of the PCAP State Committee to the area's educational needs.

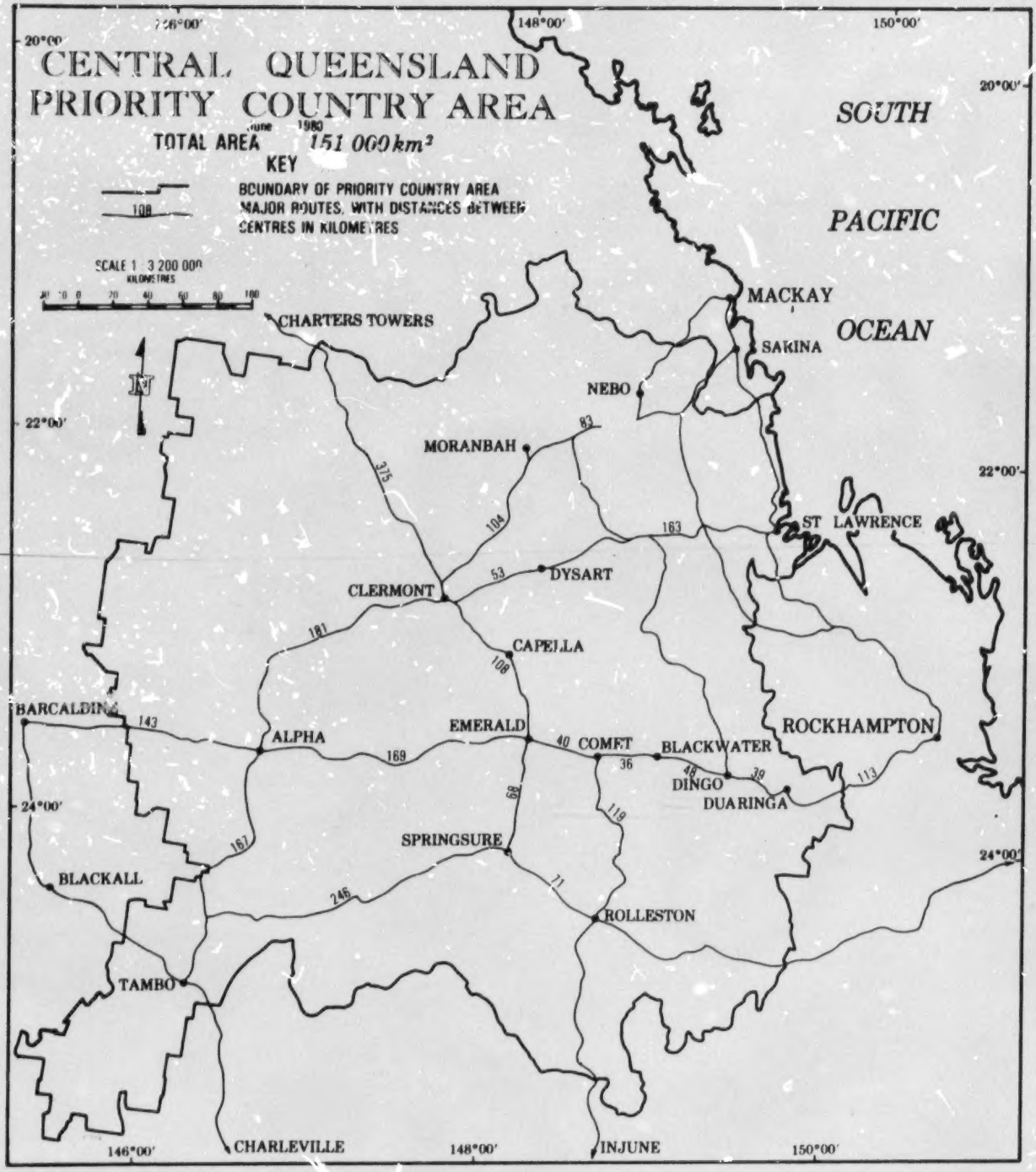
2.2.3 As a development of the informal meetings during 1977, a Central Regional Committee was convened, early in 1978, under the chairmanship of the Regional Director. In the first Newsletter issued by the Chairman, the purpose of the Committee was described as follows:

"The main function of this Committee is to receive inputs and feedback, via its members, regarding the operation of the various projects."

Several members confirmed that the Committee had been seen to have a receiving, rather than an initiating, role.

The *"various projects"* listed in that Newsletter included the Buses, the Mobile School, Cultural Pursuits and the Country Video Scheme.

Map 2:


CENTRAL QUEENSLAND
PRIORITY COUNTRY AREA
TOTAL AREA June 1980 151 000 km²
KEY
BOUNDARY OF PRIORITY COUNTRY AREA
MAJOR ROUTES, WITH DISTANCES BETWEEN CENTRES IN KILOMETRES
SCALE 1 : 3 200 000
KILOMETRES
SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN
146°00'
148°00'
150°00'
20°00'
22°00'
24°00'
CHARTERS TOWERS
MACKAY
SARINA
NEBO
MORANBAH
ST LAWRENCE
CLERMONT
DYSART
CAPELLA
BARCALDINE
ALPHA
EMERALD
COMET
BLACKWATER
ROCKHAMPTON
DINGO
DUARINGA
SPRINGSURE
BLACKALL
ROLLESTON
TAMBO
CHARLEVILLE
INJUNE
375
83
104
163
53
181
108
143
169
40
36
48
39
113
69
119
167
246
71

2.2.4 From discussions with a number of members of the original Committee, it would appear that the successful implementation of these projects, in the Central Priority Country Area, was seen as a major responsibility of that Committee. In addition, following the Chairman's lead, the Area Representatives seem to have recognised, from the first, the need for effective communication between the Committee and local communities, and to have realised the importance of their own role in that regard.

On the other hand, those members of the State Committee who were interviewed appeared to be agreed that the original purpose of the Central Regional Committee was primarily to design and implement the Mobile Classroom project. The adoption of a wider role, more akin to that of Local Advisory Committees in the South-West, was seen by them as a later development. State Committee members were also able to offer an explanation of why a single Regional Committee was formed in the Central Priority Country Area in contrast to the six Local Advisory Committees formed in the South-West. Firstly, a single committee was seen as a direct function of the original purpose of the Central Regional Committee which was to implement a single project. Secondly, the different organisational structure provided an opportunity to trial an alternative form of representation, an intention in full accord with the stated philosophy of PCAP.

2.3 Membership and organisational structure

2.3.1 The original 11-member Committee, proposed in the Chairman's first Newsletter, provided the following representation:

Department of Education - Regional Director
Catholic Education - Diocesan Director, Rockhampton
Aboriginal and Islanders Affairs (1)
Independent Schools, Rockhampton (1)
Rockhampton Grammar School (1)
Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education (1)
Area/Community Representatives (5) (from Springsure, Dingo, Marlborough, Clermont and Alpha - see paragraph 2.3.5)

Also present at the first meeting of the Committee were representatives of Catholic schools and Special Education.

2.3.2 Secretarial and resource support services for the Committee were initially supplied by officers of the State Department of Education and the Catholic Education Office respectively. Later, a Co-ordinator was appointed, who assumed the duties of Secretary to the Committee.

2.3.3 During the year (1978), an additional Area Representative and a representative of the Queensland Teachers Union joined the Committee, and representation of the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Affairs appears to have lapsed.

2.3.4 One senior informant saw representation provisions as the key to ensuring that the ideas and criticisms of interested groups were put to constructive use in the development of Committee policy.

2.3.5 From its first inception, members of the Committee were recruited through personal invitation and, judging from discussions with those involved, the choice of members was seen as a vital factor in the success of the Committee.

In particular, the selection of suitable Area Representatives was regarded as crucial. An analysis of interview transcripts suggested that the ideal Area Representative was perceived as being:

- a respected and established member of the local community;
- articulate, energetic and capable;
- able to establish and maintain a communication flow between the Committee and the local area;
- committed to improving the education of rural children; and
- an active member of some rural or other organisation such as the Cattlemen's Union, the Country Women's Association, the Isolated Children's Parents Association, the Queensland Association of Independent Schools or the United Graziers Association.

2.3.6 The Central Regional Committee appeared to have been fortunate in obtaining candidates of this calibre and informants were unanimous in recognising the contribution made by local Area Representatives, not only to the success of the Committee, but also to the various PCAP initiatives in the region. Informants were also agreed that Area Representatives had conscientiously attempted to convey to the Committee the substance of local opinion and that, because of the positions which they occupied within local communities, their endeavours had met with a considerable measure of success. An analysis of the Minutes lent some support to this view.

2.3.7 Commenting on the selection, rather than election, of Area Representatives, a senior educationist stressed the care which had been taken to ensure that nominees would be acceptable to local communities. He also mentioned a number of meetings which had been held throughout the region to explain the proposed system of representation. The same informant commented that, although selection through invitation appeared to have been particularly successful on that occasion, such an approach might be neither appropriate nor acceptable within the more formal PCAP structures which have since developed. The Ministerial guidelines for the formation of Regional Committees from 1980 onwards appear to have recognised this point.

2.3.8 During 1979, membership of the Committee underwent minor changes and at the end of the year representation was as follows:

Regional Director - Chairman
Diocesan Director - Deputy Chairman
PCAP Co-ordinator - Secretary
Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education (1)
Department of Education (1)
Catholic Schools (1)
Queensland Teachers Union (1)
Special Education (1)
Special Program Schools (1)
Independent Schools (1)
Area Representatives (6)

It will be noted that the principal change was the addition of a representative of Special Program Schools*, a move intended to facilitate effective co-operation between the two programs.

* In Queensland, schools which participate in the Schools Commission's Disadvantaged Schools Program are known as Special Program Schools.

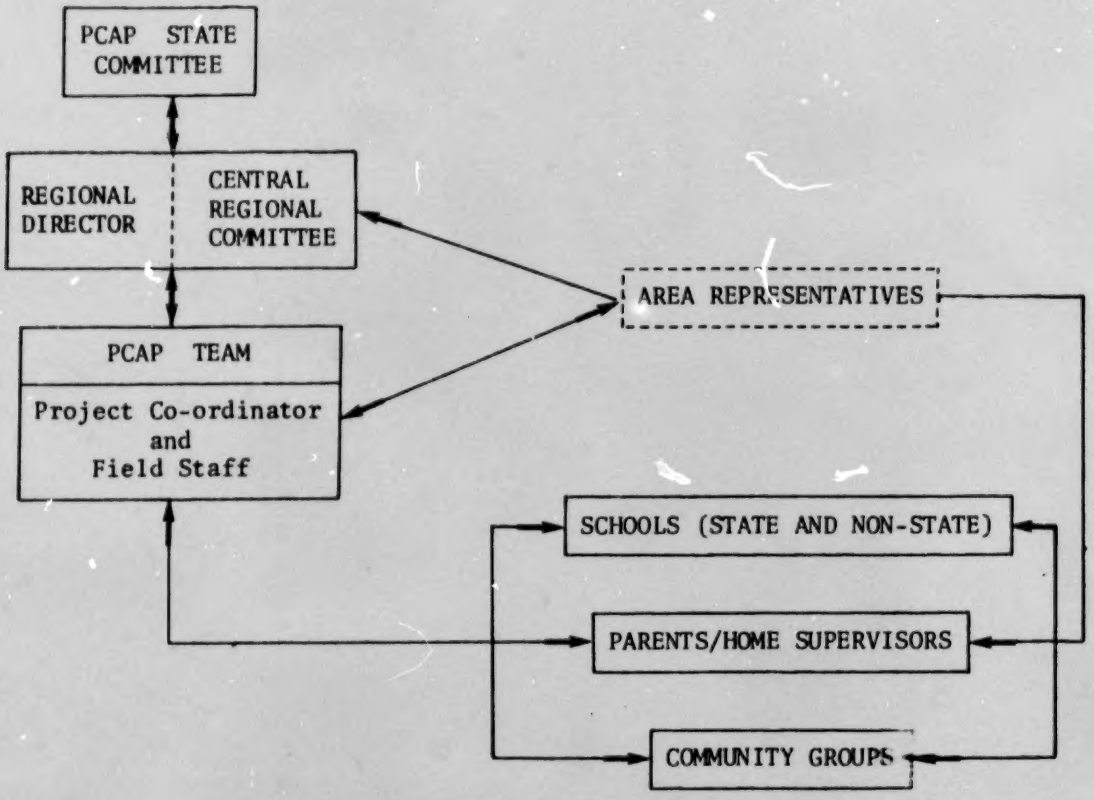
2.3.9 The continued balance between professional educationists and Area Representatives may be noted, and the key role attributed to the latter was emphasised by a succession of informants during interview. The importance of keeping the Area Representatives informed, or of seeking their opinion, was a constant theme.

2.3.10 Commenting on the overall membership pattern of the Central Regional Committee, a senior educationist noted its similarity with that of the old State Committee prior to 1980.

2.3.11 Dissatisfaction with the composition of the Committee was expressed by only one member, who considered that the urban and mining communities of the area were not adequately represented.

2.3.12 The organisational structure which had developed in the Central Priority Country Area by the end of 1979 is shown in Figure 2. A comparison of this figure with Figure 1 will reveal that the Central Regional Committee occupied an intermediate position between that of the Local Advisory Committees in the South-West and the PCAP State Committee. The involvement of the Regional and Diocesan Directors not only enhanced their role in PCAP but also gave added status to the Central Regional Committee. It may also be observed that the community representation provided by Local Advisory Committees in the South-West was supplied by the Area Representatives in the Central Region.

Figure 2: The organisational pattern of the Central Priority Country Area



2.4 Role of the Committee in practice

2.4.1 As previously indicated, the initial purpose of the Committee was seen as being to ensure the successful implementation of certain PCAP projects in the Central Region. In particular, there was a new initiative, the Mobile Classroom, to be developed. It appeared that these practical responsibilities gave the Committee a sense of purpose from the beginning. In the context of human groups, the unifying effect of collective purpose is well established (cf. Sprott 1938).

2.4.2 All members of the Committee, and particularly the Area Representatives, also emphasised the importance which was attached to developing and maintaining a network of communication and feedback, both within the Central Priority Country Area and with the PCAP State Committee and Secretariat.

2.4.3 As the original projects became established, the role of the Committee evolved into one of maintaining those projects and of maintaining the flow of communication and feedback. For instance, in the words of one member, the Committee *"became almost a governing council of the Mobile School"*. In addition to such maintenance functions, the Committee also became increasingly involved in developing ideas concerning possible new initiatives into submissions suitable for consideration by the State Committee.

2.4.4 During the developments described in the preceding paragraph, the implementation function of the Committee continued through the introduction of new projects such as the Secondary Itinerant Resource Teacher Service and the Visits to Isolated Families by Student-Teachers. At the same time, the need for careful evaluation of existing projects was receiving increasing attention. Appendix B represents an attempt to summarise some of the major PCAP events in the Central Area.

2.4.5 A major factor in the development of the Committee appears to have been the guidance received from senior educationists in the Central Region, and from the Chairman of the State Committee, in the interpretation of its role. As a result, in the Central Regional Committee's relationship with the State Committee, problems associated with 'role discrepancy' were largely avoided. The significance of such harmony was recognised by Katz and Kahn (1966), who commented:

"In role relationships, there is also satisfaction from the mutual rewarding of expectations ...".

Concerning the Committee's relationships with local communities and schools, there was, unfortunately, no direct evidence available, although Area Representatives gave no indication that they were aware of any dissonance. In this regard, the community's level of expectation would have been an important variable.

2.5 Processes and procedures

2.5.1 Throughout the history of the Central Regional Committee, regular meetings have been held every six to eight weeks, preceded by a published agenda and followed by comprehensive Minutes. On each occasion, the chair was taken either by the Regional, or the Diocesan, Director of Education. For reasons of accessibility, all meetings were, with one exception, held in Rockhampton. The one exception was during 1978, when the Committee met at Twin Hills for the debut of the Mobile School.

2.5.2 During meetings, normal procedural arrangements were followed, although the emphasis was upon maintaining an informal atmosphere. With regard to decision making, the emphasis was upon productive discussion, intended to lead to consensus when the most appropriate decision presented itself. Following each meeting, it became customary for members to join each other for social contact during an informal dinner party.

2.5.3 In recognition of her increasing involvement in PCAP activities, the former resource officer was appointed to the position of Co-ordinator during 1978, although she retained her previous responsibility for the Catholic component of the Disadvantaged Schools Program. In addition to providing the Committee with a permanent Secretary, this appointment also made available an officer who could assume responsibility for liaison and administrative duties between meetings. As well as improving communication through a monthly Newsletter, the Co-ordinator also travelled extensively throughout the region and regularly supplemented face-to-face contact with telephone conversations. Furthermore, by example and encouragement, she instituted a system whereby PCAP personnel supply regular progress reports to the Committee. It is significant that Katz and Kahn (1966) recognised the development of a permanent Secretariat and formal provisions for feedback as the principal features distinguishing an *'organisation'* from a *'voluntary group'*. In this respect, the Central Regional Committee may be contrasted with the Local Advisory Committees in the South-West.

2.5.4 Written communication between the Central Regional Committee and the Joint (or State) Committee was supplemented, whenever possible, by face-to-face contact. Thus, a representative of the Central Regional Committee, usually the Project Co-ordinator or the Chairman, regularly attended State Committee meetings and the Joint Committee Chairman was a welcome guest at the majority of Central Regional Committee meetings.

2.5.5 Within the Central Priority Country Area, both the Committee Chairman and the Area Representatives accepted a responsibility for communication, which was supplemented by the efforts of the Co-ordinator, described above. Thus, in addition to using the established communication networks of other organisations to which they belonged, the Area Representatives also maximised the opportunities provided through informal contacts in their home localities. As Regional Directors, successive Chairmen travelled extensively in the course of their normal duties and utilised any suitable opportunities provided by such travel to promote PCAP interests. On a number of occasions, the Joint Committee Chairman accompanied the Regional Director during these visits, thus further enhancing the two-way flow of communication.

2.5.6 In addition to the Area Representatives, the Committee developed other support structures at the local level. Thus, the two PCAP buses were administered by local committees at Alpha and Dingo, and at each Mobile School site the help of a local contact person, assisted by an informal support group, was enlisted.

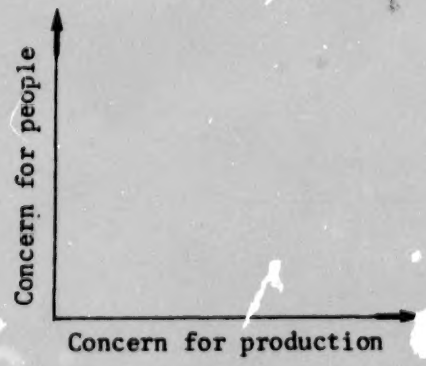
2.5.7 With regard to possible new initiatives, a co-operative approach to the preparation of submissions was developed in the Central Priority Country Area. Thus schools, local interest groups and others responsible for new ideas were encouraged to submit outline proposals to the Committee for 'formative' evaluation at an early stage. Through the adoption of this strategy, the preparation of submissions benefitted from the advice and expertise of the Regional Co-ordinator and other members of the Committee.

2.5.8 As a consequence of close consultation with the Joint Committee Chairman concerning evaluation needs, the services of an external evaluation consultant were made available to the Central Regional Committee. This arrangement resulted in the rapid and authoritative evaluation of PCAP projects in the Central Priority Country Area.

2.6 Perceptions concerning the effectiveness of the Committee

2.6.1 Sprott (1958) suggested that a group may be judged on two standards: it may be more or less *"efficient"* in the performance of its task and more or less *"effective"* in the personal rewards it provides to its members. Katz and Kahn (1966) translated a similar notion into systems theory when they recognised that all open systems require not only *"production"* but also *"maintenance"* inputs. The latter they related to efforts designed to maintain group morale and enthusiasm. The same dichotomy appears in the Managerial Grid, developed by Blake and Mouton (1964), which has two axes: one indicating *"concern for people"* and the other *"concern for production"*. Their concept is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 3. By numbering the axes from 1 to 9, they were able to locate a number of management styles at different places within the grid. Blake and Mouton advocate the 9.9 position, where they envisage a high degree of concern for both productivity and people combining to produce a team approach in which committed persons work together to achieve organisational purposes in relationships of trust and respect.

Figure 3: The two axes of the Managerial Grid



These concepts can be seen as providing a useful frame of reference within which to view judgements concerning the operational effectiveness of the Central Regional Committee.

2.6.2 Firstly, asked to comment on the work of the Committee in global terms, all informants were agreed that the Committee had been either 'effective' or 'very effective' in its operations. By the majority of informants, this success was attributed largely to the personal qualities of those involved. As one senior educationist commented:

"We had such good people - and I suppose any organisation or any committee works well when its got the right people ...".

Several informants commented upon the *"spirit of goodwill and co-operation"* which they felt to have characterised Committee activities and upon the importance of the Chairman's role in this regard. It is relevant that Sprott (1958) drew attention to the importance of a committee chairman who consistently encourages members to express their opinions and thus ensures full utilisation of all the group's latent talent.

2.6.3 It was generally agreed that the Committee's communication network had been very well developed and that the Area Representatives and the Project Co-ordinator had played major roles in this regard. The visits of the State Chairman were also seen as extremely important in maintaining communication with the State Committee.

2.6.4 With regard to the implementation and maintenance of projects, informants judged the Committee to have been extremely successful in its efforts. Part of this success was attributed to the quality of PCAP field staff in the Central Priority Country Area.

2.6.5 With regard to submissions to the State Committee, the majority of informants appeared to share the view of the Area Representative who commented: *"We had a very good hearing."*. Two factors appeared to have contributed to this. Firstly, there was the careful preparation and scrutiny of submissions, as described in paragraph 2.5.7, and secondly, the Joint Committee was aware that any submissions from the Central Regional Committee enjoyed the support of senior educationists in that region. Here it may be noted that a number of authorities such as Owens and Steinhoff (1976) have recognised that:

"The ideas of people in the higher echelons carry more weight and are acted upon more readily than the ideas of those in lower positions.".

2.6.6 PCAP records reveal that during 1978 and 1979, the Joint Committee received 13 formal submissions from the Central Regional Committee. Information concerning the fate of these submissions is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Outcomes of submissions received from the Central Regional Committee

Result	1978	1979	Totals
Approval in original form	3	7	10 (77%)
Approved with modifications	1	0	1 (8%)
Approved after deferral and modifications	1	0	1 (8%)
Total approved	5	7	12 (92%)
Referred elsewhere	0	1	1 (8%)
Total number of submissions	5	8	13 (100%)

2.6.7 Table 2 gives some indication of the range of topics covered by the 13 submissions.

Table 2: Numbers and outcomes of Central Regional Committee submissions according to the topic of the submission (to December 1979)

Topic	Approved	Not Approved	Totals
Transport for pupils/teachers	3		3
Cultural/recreational activities	2		2
Administration	1		1
Remedial education	1		1
Help for correspondence pupils	3		3
Resources/equipment	2	1*	3
Totals	12	1	13

* This submission, after unsuccessful referral to an alternative agency, was later approved and funded during 1980.

2.6.8 It may be noted that 12 out of the 13 submissions were approved, giving an overall success rate of 92 per cent. This compares favourably with the composite success rate of 73 per cent for submissions reaching the State Committee from all other sources and also with the 47 per cent success rate of submissions from Local Advisory Committees. A further analysis of submissions from the Central Regional Committee, compared to those from other sources appears in Section 4. In terms of impact on the total program, it appears that submissions from the Central Regional Committee have accounted for less than three per cent of the total PCAP budget. If, however, projects such as the Alpha and Dingo buses, and the Mobile Classroom, which originated from the Central Priority Country Area prior to the formation of the Committee, are included, the proportion rises to approximately six per cent.

2.6.9 Nevertheless, despite the high success rate, there were certain reservations, concerning the treatment of submissions, which appeared to have caused some frustration. The two most commonly mentioned were:

- what were regarded as the long delays between the submission of a proposal and its implementation in the field; and
- the pruning or modification of carefully prepared proposals at State Committee level.

It may be noted that all such criticisms originated from Central Regional Committee members with no Departmental affiliations. Two of these members also expressed dissatisfaction with the degree of autonomy accorded to their Committee. Departmental members of the State Committee suggested that such problems might be largely developmental in origin and should tend to disappear as PCAP mechanisms and guidelines became more clearly established and understood. An additional dimension was added to this viewpoint by the informant who referred to the 'Departmentalisation' of PCAP, a process which he envisaged would produce increasing congruence between new submissions and existing educational policies and provisions thus resulting in improved rates of acceptance.

2.6.10 Despite the occasional frustrations mentioned in the preceding paragraph, membership of the Committee was viewed as a satisfying experience by all informants. Continuity of membership, high level of attendance (over 70 per cent) and the personal commitment of members were cited as evidence in support of this view. The views of Katz and Kahn, quoted in paragraph 2.4.5, may also be relevant in this connection.

2.6.11 Several informants shared the view that, by bringing representatives together on one committee for the whole area, some of the parochialism which they associated with more decentralised structures had been avoided.

2.6.12 A final factor which was seen as contributing to the effectiveness of the Central Regional Committee was the high level of co-operation achieved between the State and Catholic education systems.

2.7 PCAP re-organisation and the future of the Central Regional Committee

2.7.1 Membership of the Committee was undergoing a degree of re-organisation to bring it into line with the new Ministerial guidelines. It was envisaged that existing Area Representatives would retain their membership as the nominees of approved organisations. Concern was expressed by a number of informants that the Committee should not be allowed to grow too large.

2.7.2 Under the new arrangements, the Chairmen of Regional Committees would be ex-officio members of the State Management Committee. A majority of informants saw this formalisation of regional committee representation at State Committee level as a positive step forward. In particular, it was anticipated that improved communication, especially in an upward direction, could result.

Although the enhanced role of Regional Chairmen as links between committees was appreciated, a number of informants expressed the hope that other members of the State Committee would continue to visit the regions. A commonly expressed viewpoint was that, whereas the General Secretary might be the most appropriate person to attend Regional Committee meetings on a regular basis, a high level of demand for periodic visits from the State Chairman could still be expected.

2.7.3 There was general satisfaction that Regional Committees could expect to receive some degree of autonomy in the control of funds.

2.8 Conclusions

2.8.1 There appeared to be general agreement amongst informants that the Central Regional Committee 'model' was one that had proved particularly successful in the context within which it had been developed. Consequently, it was felt that there was much to be learnt from a study of that 'model'. Nevertheless, despite the recognised success of the Central Regional Committee, one of its principal architects expressed reservations about the generalisability of any one particular 'model'. This same informant drew attention to the need for committee structures to be tailored to suit each individual situation and to be capable of evolving to meet changing needs.

2.8.2 Informants were also generally agreed about the importance of the contribution which Area Representatives had made to the success of the Committee. It appeared that the way in which such representatives interpreted their role was regarded as a crucial factor.

2.8.3 Organisational theory suggests that a further factor in the success of the Committee may have been related to an organisational climate which has emphasised a high level of concern for both people and production.

2.8.4 The performance of the Regional Co-ordinator in the Central Priority Country Area had demonstrated to all informants the key role of such officers in the development of PCAP regional structures. A first meeting of Regional Co-ordinators was held in Brisbane during 1980 and, in the interests of regional development, an ongoing program of collaboration, inter-regional visits and Brisbane conferences could be seen as desirable.

2.8.5 Finally, there were the implications inherent in the 'Departmentalisation' of PCAP, as mentioned in paragraph 2.6.9. The literature of 'Organisation Development' records numerous instances where, after an initial impact, the impetus of an innovation has been absorbed by the inbuilt resistance to change which is a recognised feature of most organisational systems. Consequently, a possible danger existed that the 'Departmentalisation' of PCAP could result in some abatement of its innovative emphasis and some reduction in the opportunities for 'grass roots' and other non-Departmental inputs to influence the program.

SECTION 3: LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES (LACs) IN SOUTH-WEST QUEENSLAND PRIOR TO 1980

3.1 Evaluation approach, methods and procedures

3.1.1 The study was concerned with investigating:

- the origins and purpose of LACs;
- their organisation and functioning;
- the effectiveness of LACs and their impact on PCAP; and
- the future of LACs in the context of PCAP re-organisation.

3.1.2 Information was collected in the following ways:

- from a written survey of LACs;
- from documentation on PCAP files;
- from interviews with LAC members, PCAP staff and members of the Joint Committee; and
- from participant observation of LAC meetings.

3.1.3 Replies were received from five of the six LACs surveyed.

3.1.4 Although data collection had commenced during 1979, completion of the study was accelerated to provide an informal report early in 1980 (see paragraph 1.1.1).

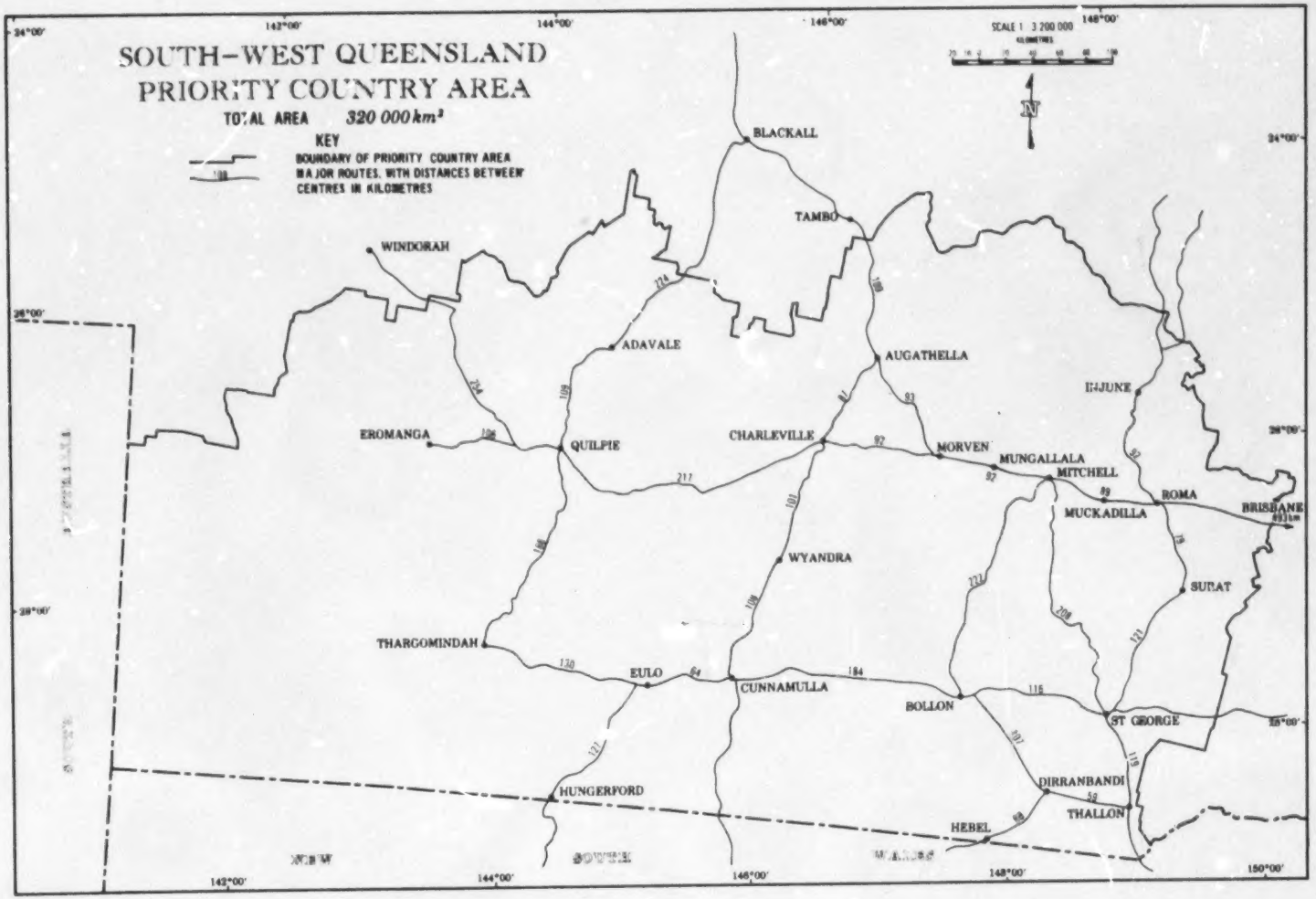
3.2 Background

3.2.1 The idea of forming LACs was first discussed by the Joint Committee at a meeting on 6 September 1977, when it was decided to gauge local interest in the establishment of such committees in Cunnamulla, Charleville, Quilpie, St George and Roma. As a result of this initiative, local committees were formed at these five centres during the latter part of 1977.

3.2.2 At a Joint Committee meeting on 11 October 1977, the need for a similar committee at Mitchell was raised, and as a result the Mitchell Local Advisory Committee was formed early in 1978. These six committees operated from that time, until a seventh was added in November 1979, when the Thargomindah Local Advisory Committee was formed.

3.2.3 Map 3 shows the location of these centres within the South-West Priority Country Area.

Map 3:


SOUTH-WEST QUEENSLAND
PRIORITY COUNTRY AREA
TOTAL AREA 320 000 km²
KEY
BOUNDARY OF PRIORITY COUNTRY AREA
MAJOR ROUTES, WITH DISTANCES BETWEEN CENTRES IN KILOMETRES
SCALE 1 : 3 200 000
BLACKALL
TAMBO
WINDORAH
ADAVALE
AUGATHELLA
EJUNE
EROMANGA
QUILPIE
CHARLEVILLE
MORVEN
MUNGALLALA
MITCHELL
ROMA
MUCKADILLA
BRISBANE
WYANDRA
SURAT
THARGOMINDAH
EULO
CUNNAMULLA
BOLLON
ST GEORGE
DIRRANBANDI
THALLON
HEBEL
HUNGERFORD
NEW SOUTH WALES
142°00'
144°00'
146°00'
148°00'
150°00'
24°00'
26°00'
28°00'

3.3 Purpose of Local Advisory Committees

3.3.1 At the meeting on 6 September 1977, the Joint Committee supplied the following indication of the role envisaged for LACs:

- to propose initiatives to the Joint Committee;
- to comment on initiatives proposed to the Joint Committee from other sources;
- to encourage local involvement in the project's initiatives and to ensure that information on initiatives is disseminated amongst local communities;
- to report to the Joint Committee on ways of ensuring that maximum benefit is being derived from initiatives taken;
- to set up an information network involving all local committees, the Project Director and his team, and the Joint Committee; and
- to assist in the evaluation of the project.

3.3.2 Shortly after the Joint Committee was first formed early in 1977, members of that Committee toured South-West Queensland to sample local opinion about the educational needs of the area. Thus, the establishment of LACs could, as a senior member of the Joint Committee has suggested, be seen as *"a formalisation of that early consultative process ..."*.

3.3.3 The minutes of the meeting on 6 September 1977 also recorded that *"further discussion centred on the possibility of allocating to each of the local committees funds for mounting their own initiatives"*. The Management Committee was asked to explore this notion further (see paragraph 3.5.2).

3.3.4 In *"A Report on the Disadvantaged Country Areas Program for 1977"*, the Schools Commission (1978) offered the following comments which appear relevant to the purpose of LACs:

"An early challenge for the Program has been to find the best way of ensuring effective decision-making at the local level. One guiding principle has been that communities themselves should make as many decisions about schooling as possible, since they are the ones to be affected by them. But there is a tension between the need for local participation in decision-making and the need for experience and expertise and for action which can only be successfully undertaken at State or system level. While new, developing local committees must have room to exercise responsibility, they also need support."

3.4 Membership and organisation of Local Advisory Committees

3.4.1 Representation on LACs was discussed by the Joint Committee on 11 October 1977 and the Committee felt that *"such representation should reflect the local community and not be 'school-based' or narrow P. & C."*. It was agreed that *"this feeling was to be conveyed to each of the Committees by local convenors"*.

3.4.2 Replies to the survey suggested that, in practice, there was considerable variation in the size and composition of LACs:

- the number of members had ranged from eight in Cunnamulla to a mailing list of 25 in Charleville, with an average of 16;
- the proportion of professional educators, such as school teachers, had ranged from under 40 per cent to over 80 per cent;
- the committees had included a high proportion of 'temporary' residents, such as bank employees, engineers, clergy and school teachers;
- a high proportion of members was resident in urban centres; and
- the proportion of 'permanent' residents had nowhere exceeded 40 per cent and in one case was as low as 11 per cent.

3.4.3 Other features of LACs revealed by the survey included:

- none of the committees had a written constitution;
- each committee had a chairperson and secretary, elected by the members;
- except in Charleville, where any interested person could attend the committee meetings, new members were nominated by existing committee members;
- at the end of 1979, the average committee member had served for 18 months;
- some committees followed a regular program of meetings, e.g. St George met six times during 1979, whereas others only met when the need arose, e.g. Quilpie, with only two meetings during 1979;
- the average number of meetings per committee during 1979 was five;
- the average attendance at meetings was over 70 per cent; and
- the commonest venue for meetings was one of the local schools.

3.5 The role of Local Advisory Committees

3.5.1 During 1978 and 1979, the role of LACs developed very much in accordance with that implied by their title, i.e. they were able to offer advice to the Joint Committee, but had not been directly involved in the decision making process. Thus, the *"tension"* referred to by the Schools Commission (paragraph 3.3.4) appeared to some of those involved to have resulted in a centralisation of decision making power.

3.5.2 The suggestion that funds be made available to LACs for mounting local initiatives (see paragraph 3.3.3) was not finally approved for implementation. In practice, their access to PCAP funding was limited to the authority to apply for reimbursement of expenses incurred for postage and stationery.

3.5.3 The written survey of LACs produced the following perceptions of their role:

"Initiating submissions to Joint Committee so as to overcome perceived educational needs in the area."

"Considering submissions made by outside (non-school organisations) before referring them to Joint Committee."

"Overseeing existing projects."

"To try to make PCAP a success and put to good use those items and help that are available and best used in the local area to overcome the educational disadvantage. However, although the interested people are coming together to try to achieve this aim it is often felt that our committee is being regarded by the Joint Committee as a statistic and politically useful."

3.5.4 The written survey also produced the following perceptions of the ideal role of a LAC:

"... LACs should have more say in the approving of submissions."

"To make the Joint Committee aware of the needs of the various bodies and schools in the area, compile submissions and supervise any aid given so that it is used to the best advantage and cared for in the best possible manner."

3.6 The impact of LAC submissions on the PCAP program

3.6.1 The preparation and vetting of submissions figured strongly both in the intended and the actual role of LACs.

3.6.2 Details of the total number of submissions received by the Joint Committee, from its inception in 1977 to the end of 1979, are shown in Table 3. It will be seen that of the total number of 181, 34 (19 per cent) came from LACs.

Table 3: Numbers of submissions received from LACs compared to numbers received from all other sources

Origin	1977	1978	1979	Totals
Local Advisory Committees	3 (5%)	17 (25%)	14 (25%)	34 (19%)
Others	56 (95%)	50 (75%)	41 (75%)	147 (81%)
Totals	59 (100%)	67 (100%)	55 (100%)	181 (100%)

3.6.3 Table 4 compares the outcomes of submissions from LACs with those from other sources. It may be noted that 47 per cent of LAC submissions were successful, compared to an 81 per cent success rate for submissions from other sources. Overall, of the 135 successful submissions, 16 (12 per cent) came from LACs. (Further analysis of the number, type and quality of submissions was undertaken to investigate this difference and is reported in Section 4.)

Table 4: Outcomes of submissions received from LACs compared to outcomes of submissions from all other sources

Result	1977		1978		1979		Totals	
	LACs	Others	LACs	Others	LACs	Others	LACs	Others
Successful	0	44 (79%)	11 (65%)	41 (82%)	5 (36%)	34 (83%)	16 (47%)	119 (81%)
Unsuccessful	3 (100%)	11 (20%)	6 (35%)	8 (16%)	5 (36%)	7 (17%)	14 (41%)	26 (18%)
Deferred	0	1 (2%)	0	1 (2%)	4 (28%)	0	4 (12%)	2 (1%)
Totals	3 (100%)	56 (100%)	17 (100%)	50 (100%)	14 (100%)	41 (100%)	34 (100%)	147 (100%)

3.6.4 A further examination of PCAP records revealed that reasons had been recorded for the non-approval of 17 of the 18 submissions which had not received the approval of the Joint Committee by 31 December 1979. This information is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Reasons recorded for the non-approval of LAC submissions

Reasons for non-approval of submission	Number
Lack of originality/duplication of existing initiatives	4
Proposed initiative not within PCAP guidelines	6
Unnecessary or need not established	2
Proposed initiative judged ineffective	1
Decision deferred pending further investigation	4
No reason recorded	1
Total	18

It may be noted that the more common reasons for non-approval related to lack of originality and to failure to meet PCAP guidelines, which together accounted for 56 per cent of the unsuccessful submissions.

3.6.5 An analysis of the numbers and outcomes of submissions from different LACs is provided in Table 6. It will be observed that the most active LAC in this respect was Cunnamulla with a total of 12 submissions, of which six (50 per cent) were successful. One of the less successful was Charleville, with only four submissions of which the only one approved was never actually implemented.

Table 6: Numbers and outcomes of submissions received from individual LACs up to 31 December 1979

Local Advisory Committee	Total Number of Submissions	Number Approved and Approval Rate (%)
Cunnamulla	12	6 (50%)
Mitchell	3	3 (100%)
Roma	7	3 (43%)
St George	5	1 (20%)
Quilpie	3	2 (67%)
Charleville	4	1 (25%)
Totals	34	16 (47%)

3.6.6 Table 7 shows the range of topics covered by LAC submissions and the numbers and outcomes of the submissions under each topic heading. It may be noted that the largest number of submissions (12) related to cultural/recreational activities and that such submissions formed over half of the total number of successful submissions. A total lack of success may also be noticed in some topic areas.

Table 7: Numbers and outcomes of LAC submissions according to the topic of the submission

Topic of Submission	Total Number of Submissions	Number Approved and Approval Rate (%)
Transport for pupils/teachers	3	NIL
Cultural/recreational activities	12	9 (67%)
Administration	1	1 (100%)
Remedial education	6	2 (33%)
Education resources/equipment	4	NIL
Assistance for teachers	3	NIL
Home-school liaison	1	NIL
Assistance to isolated families	3	3 (100%)
Instrumental music teaching	1	1 (100%)
Totals	34	16 (47%)

3.6.7 Reference to PCAP financial records revealed that the total expenditure on LAC submissions for 1977, 1978 and 1979 was slightly in excess of $54,000, which is just under three per cent of the total PCAP budget for that period. Such figures do not suggest that LACs had a major impact on the allocation of PCAP funds prior to 1980. However, it may be important to realise that these figures do not necessarily represent the full impact of local opinion on fund allocation, since a number of major commitments followed the visit of Joint Committee members to the South-West and preceded the formation of LACs.

3.6.8 A breakdown of the funds expended on LAC submissions is provided in Table 8. It may be noted that 42 per cent of this funding was expended on Cunnamulla submissions and that submissions from Roma and Mitchell accounted for a further 51 per cent, leaving only eight per cent for submissions from the other three LACs. The success of Cunnamulla and Roma may, perhaps, be explained by their adoption of projects originally initiated by the Joint Committee. Thus, Cunnamulla has applied for annual extensions of the Remedial Aide Scheme and Roma applied for an additional teacher for the Instrumental Music Service. Such 'adopted' projects have accounted for some 45 per cent of the funds expended on LAC submissions.

Table 8: Proportion of funding expended on each topic and LAC, expressed as a percentage of the total funds expended on all LAC submissions

Topic of Submission \ LAC	Cunnamulla	Mitchell	Roma	St George	Quilpie	Charleville	Total
Cultural/recreational activities	8%	25%	9%		6%		48%
Administration	2%						2%
Remedial education	28%						28%
Assistance for isolated families	4%			2%			6%
Instrumental music teaching			17%				17%
Totals	42%	25%	26%	2%	6%	0%	101%

* The total of 101% results from the 'rounding off' of figures.

3.6.9 Finally, it would be inappropriate to imply that the impact of LAC submissions is invariably proportional to the level of funding involved. Thus, the expenditure of a few hundred dollars on pottery equipment in a small country centre may enrich the curriculum for a number of children to an extent that is hard to measure.

3.7 Contribution of Local Advisory Committees to PCAP evaluation

3.7.1 A stated purpose of LACs was to assist in the evaluation of PCAP projects. In October 1978, the Project Director issued a general invitation to LACs to contribute *"statements evaluative of the Program"* and in October 1979 the Evaluation Co-ordinator issued a more detailed request for assistance. By March 1980, two LACs had responded with detailed and useful written comments on PCAP initiatives and others had contributed brief verbal or written recommendations concerning specific services. Such comments were incorporated in a number of formal and informal reports in the PCAP evaluation series.

3.7.2 Submissions for the annual renewal of funding had also incorporated some useful evaluatory comments, e.g. the Cunnamulla Aides, suggesting that funding on an annual basis, where appropriate, may be useful in encouraging accountability.

3.7.3 From the comments received, it was apparent that LACs had a valuable viewpoint to offer on PCAP services and that their closer involvement in the evaluation program was clearly desirable.

3.8 Other functions of Local Advisory Committees

3.8.1 One of the early PCAP initiatives was the provision of transport facilities for country schools. In the South-West, this took the form of two 22-seater buses, one based in Charleville and the other in St George. The two LACs, either directly or through sub-committees, were responsible for the administration of these buses. Despite problems associated with distance, voluntary drivers and level of demand, the system, on the whole, worked well. The decision making role and sense of purpose associated with this responsibility may help to explain the greater frequency of LAC meetings in the two centres involved.

3.8.2 There was little evidence of other LAC functions during 1977, 1978 or 1979, apart from a combined meeting of LACs in Charleville during July 1978 and attendance at meetings of the Joint Committee in St George (November 1977) and Roma (April 1978).

3.9 Problems and constraints limiting the effectiveness of Local Advisory Committees

3.9.1 In response to the written survey, LACs supplied a number of outspoken comments concerning their difficulties and problems. These have been quoted in full to emphasise that they represent *LAC perceptions* of the situation. For this reason they are important, irrespective of the extent to which they agree with the perceptions of others involved in PCAP. The comments are listed below.

(a) *"The lack of communication and apparent disinterest in any of our correspondence by the Joint Committee; particularly as no correspondence is acknowledged and very rarely is a reply received."*

(b) *"The long delays in the majority of the submissions being presented to the Joint Committee. This has caused a feeling of hopelessness in our committee."*

(c) *"Decisions being made and proposals long in the process of being implemented prior to asking the LAC for their comments. This has wasted many valuable hours at our meetings and many points raised are virtually useless because the proposal has gone too far to be altered."*

(d) *"The dispersal (spread outness) of committee members and member schools."*

(e) *"Lack of 'solid' communication between:*
(a) members in between meetings; and
(b) between the LAC and the Joint Committee."

(f) *"Because of the remoteness of the various member schools, there is difficulty in selecting the most convenient venue."*

(g) *"The ruggedness of the roads travelled upon to attend meetings deters members from attending regularly."*

(h) *"... due to late arrival of the April submission, a damper was put on the activities."*

3.9.2 It appeared from the above comments that the principal problem areas perceived by LACs fell into three categories:

(i) communication breakdowns between the Joint Committee and the LACs;
(ii) delays relating to LAC submissions; and
(iii) local problems relating to distance and road conditions.

3.9.3 LACs also supplied the following suggestions for improving the situation:

(a) *"... a more concise description of the proposed role of the original LAC would have helped form a stronger LAC here."*

(b) *"Many members, although they attend meetings, would be more enthusiastic if there were visits by key Joint Committee personnel at least once a year to either attend meetings or visit schools or both. Associated with this is the need for more liaison between LACs and Joint Committee."*

(c) *"Improve communication with Joint Committees by having a LAC representative on the Joint Committee. If not this, at least the correspondence could be acknowledged and replied to without undue delay. Also a member of the Joint Committee could attend an occasional LAC meeting to convey the thoughts of the Joint Committee to the LAC so that LACs may have a clearer understanding of the present situation."*

3.9.4 An emphasis on the perceived need for improved communication was again evident in the above remarks.

3.9.5 In relation to the final suggestion above (paragraph 3.9.3(c)), it may be noted that the question of LAC representation at Joint Committee meetings was discussed by the Joint Committee on 29 November 1977. At that meeting, it was decided that *"LAC members could not have access to PCAP meetings as the membership is restricted to the present number"*. However, it was further decided that *"statements of meetings for LACs would be prepared"*, although there was no evidence that the latter recommendation had ever been implemented.

3.9.6 The requests for occasional visits from members of the Joint Committee (paragraphs 3.9.3(b) and (c)) highlighted a contrast with the Central Priority Country Area, where the existence of only one committee, meeting in Rockhampton, had facilitated regular visits by Joint Committee members.

3.9.7 Discussion with LAC members and attendance at meetings also revealed that the rejection of submissions constituted another problem area. Thus, when a LAC had spent some time in the preparation of a submission, what was perceived as a comparatively curt notice of rejection may have caused some disillusion, e.g. *"supply of two teachers to ... area - not to be funded at this stage"*. Although a desire to avoid the controversy which could have resulted from supplying reasons for rejection is understandable, the guarded nature of such replies was unlikely to prove encouraging to the authors of submissions.

3.9.8 During discussion with members of the Joint Committee, the following *personal perceptions* relevant to the problems under consideration were recorded:

(a) *"LACs never really had any autonomy."*

(b) *"As a central committee I don't think we've been as responsive as we might have been, on occasions, to thoughts that they* (the LACs) *did put up."*

(c) *"The Management Committee looked to the group* (the LAC) *to promote any sort of initiative that had originated in their area ... On the other hand, I suspect that the LACs felt hamstrung by the management supervision, and that they really wanted to be able to do more for themselves ... They didn't see, for instance, the sort of filters there were on approval of finance."*

(d) *"I think we've got to do something to overcome the 'them and us' mentality that seems to have developed, and it's not all just on the side of the central committee."*

(e) *"... the biggest disappointment I have about them* (the LACs) *is that, whether we've put them into that role or whether they've fallen into it by their own choice I'm not sure, but they have tended to sit back and react instead of taking a positive role and putting forward proposals. We've had a few, but not a lot ..."*

(f) *"I think their* (the LACs) *impact has been a lot smaller than it should have been."*

3.9.9 As with most questions, it was clear that there were many differing viewpoints about the problems faced by LACs. What, however, did appear to emerge was the need for closer liaison and improved communication between LACs and other PCAP committees.

3.10 The future of Local Advisory Committees

3.10.1 The re-organisation of PCAP and the formation of Regional Committees during 1980 has drawn attention to the question of the future role of LACs. One LAC has already applied for representation on the Regional Committee, and this idea has been supported by several members of the old Joint Committee. As one of these members suggested:

"I have a feeling that formal recognition of LACs and their role should be made when the membership of the Regional Co-ordinating Committees is being organised ... even if it's on a rotating basis ... it would get them more involved and it would give them insights into how the regional committees operate. I think it would make for a better understanding of the program ...

I think there probably needs to be some kind of restatement of their roles and a sharpening up of the expectations of people, both centrally and locally, as to what their function is."

3.10.2 A concern for the future of LACs shared by many of those associated with PCAP, was voiced by another member of the old Joint Committee in the following words:

"I think too, that at this stage of the program, LACs are in a crisis situation and unless we acknowledge, not just their presence, but their capacity to generate enthusiasm and action, we could well lose their support and with that lose the sense of local identity in the program."

3.11 Issues

3.11.1 With the re-organisation of PCAP, there appeared to be the need for some restatement of the role and status of LACs and a formalisation of their relationship with both the Regional Co-ordinating Committee and the new State Management Committee.

3.11.2 PCAP records indicated that submissions from LACs had met with a lower than average rate of success. If, in their restated role, LACs would continue to be involved in the preparation and/or vetting of submissions, this past experience suggested that the issue of formal guidelines to assist them in this process would be desirable. Support from PCAP or other regional personnel with the appropriate expertise might also be welcomed.

3.11.3 The study revealed a feeling amongst LAC members, and members of the old Joint Committee, that LACs should have some form of representation on the new Regional Co-ordinating Committee. Early consultation on this issue, between the new Regional Co-ordinating Committee and the seven LACs, was indicated.

3.11.4 The study also revealed some dissatisfaction, on the part of LAC members, with the level of communication, both written and face-to-face, which had existed between the LACs, the Joint Committee and the PCAP Secretariat. If the continuing support and enthusiasm of LACs were to be maintained, the level of communication might have to be improved.

3.11.5 Through providing comments on PCAP services, LACs had made a useful contribution to the evaluation program. It was hoped that this role could be retained and developed within the new organisational framework.

3.11.6 Advantages would clearly accrue if the membership of LACs were as wide as possible in its representation of community interests. Another important consideration was that of continuity of membership.

SECTION 4: AN OVERVIEW

4.1 A comparison of submissions reaching the PCAP Joint Committee during the years 1977, 1978 and 1979

4.1.1 Sections 2 and 3 of this report have indicated that the preparation of submissions was an important task of local and regional PCAP committees during the years under consideration. Previous reference has also been made to the high rate of success achieved by submissions from the Central Regional Committee.

4.1.2 During 1977, 1978 and 1979, PCAP records indicated that 181 submissions reached the Joint Committee, of which 135 (75 per cent) were successful. An analysis of these submissions, by source and by year, is provided in Table 9.

Table 9: Origin and outcome of submissions reaching the Joint Committee during 1977, 1978 and 1979

Origin \ Year	1977	1978	1979	Totals	Approval Rate
Local Advisory Committees	3(0)	17(11)	14(5)	34(16)	47%
Central Regional Committee	-	5(5)	8(7)	13(12)	92%
All other sources	56(44)	45(36)	33(27)	134(107)	80%
Totals	59(44)	57(52)	55(39)	181(135)	75%

N.B. The figures in brackets show the number of submissions which had received Joint Committee approval prior to 31 December 1979.

4.1.3 The final column of Table 9 illustrates the marked differences in the approval rates of submissions from different sources. Recognition of these differences gave rise to speculation concerning the reason for such variations; in particular, the marked difference in the approval rate of submissions from the South-West Local Advisory Committees (47 per cent) compared to that of submissions from the Central Regional Committee (92 per cent) appeared to require some explanation.

4.1.4 Further analysis of the submissions from both sources revealed the following contrasts.

Central Regional Committee:

- emphasis on regional initiatives;
- emphasis on originality;
- close congruence with PCAP guidelines;
- widespread support at regional level;
- submitted through senior educationists (e.g. Regional Director); and
- relatively few submissions.

Local Advisory Committees:

- emphasis on local initiatives;
- less emphasis on originality;
- less congruence with PCAP guidelines;
- main support at local level;
- not usually submitted through senior educationists; and
- higher number of submissions.

4.1.5 It seems reasonable to infer that these contrasts could, in part, be attributable to the different committee structures which had evolved in the two areas. Thus, it is not surprising that a single Regional Committee, chaired by a Regional Director, should have originated a smaller number of carefully developed submissions, with less duplication and an emphasis upon initiatives expected to have an impact at the regional level.

4.1.6 Furthermore, despite the difference in approval rates noted above, Table 10 below reveals that there was relatively little difference between submissions from the South-West and Central regions in terms of the absolute numbers of submissions approved and the amounts of funding involved.

Table 10: Approved submissions and funding involved for 1978 and 1979

Origin of submission	Total Number Approved	Total Funding
Local Advisory Committees	16	$ 54,000
Central Regional Committee	12	$ 57,000
Totals	28	$111,000

It appears, therefore, that a concern on the part of the Joint Committee to maintain a degree of balance between the two regions may well have contributed, in some measure, to the lower approval rate of submissions from the South-West. It has also to be remembered that, as the first region to be declared, the South-West was already receiving a larger share of total PCAP funds.

4.1.7 The total of 28 successful submissions from Local Advisory Committees and the Central Regional Committee (Table 10) represented approximately 30 per cent of the total number of successful submissions from all sources during 1978 and 1979. The total funding of $111,000 for those 28 submissions, although only five per cent of the total PCAP budget, also represented approximately 30 per cent of total funding available for new submissions during the period under review.

4.2 Developments and conclusions

4.2.1 As explained in Section 1 (paragraph 1.3.8), the year 1980 commenced with some re-organisation of the PCAP committee structures. In accordance with the new Ministerial guidelines, Regional Committees were formed in both the South-West and North-West Priority Country Areas, while the Central Regional Committee continued with only minor membership changes. In the South-West, each Local Advisory Committee is now represented directly upon the Regional Committee. Also, as previously explained, the Chairman of each Regional Committee is an ex-officio member of the State Management Committee, thus completing the direct linkage between committees at the State, regional and local levels.

4.2.2 As part of the process of decentralisation, PCAP Regional Committees have received a measure of autonomy in the control of funds. Thus, during the financial year 1980/81, the sum of $20,000 was allocated to each region, to be spent at the discretion of the Regional Committee. For 1981/82, this regional allocation has been increased to $40,000. In the case of major proposals, Regional Committees continue to pass submissions to the State Committee as in the past.

4.2.3 Preliminary indications are that the Regional Committees are functioning effectively and that the degree of autonomy accorded to them has been well-received, particularly the increased allocation of regional funds for 1981/82. The use of Regional Chairmen as links between the State and Regional Committees appears to have been successful in facilitating two-way communication, while formal incorporation of Local Advisory Committees into the new structure appears to have provided them with the recognition which they sought.

In particular, Local Advisory Committees have been encouraged by the Regional Committee to increase their contribution to the monitoring and evaluation of PCAP initiatives in the South-West. As one consequence of this, it proved possible to incorporate the viewpoint of Local Advisory Committees in the recently completed evaluation report on the Mobile Field Study (Fowler, in press). It does, however, appear that the full implications of regionalisation for the role of Local Advisory Committees have yet to be clarified.

4.2.4 In view of the absence of firm data, further comment upon the effectiveness of the new PCAP committee structures would appear inappropriate at this stage. If and when any evaluation of the impact of regionalisation is undertaken (see paragraph 1.1.3), then a more informed and detailed assessment should be possible. In the meantime, it would appear that a major challenge facing PCAP committees will be that of interpreting the latest guidelines, as they relate to Country Area Programs, which have been provided by the Commonwealth Minister for Education, following the Schools Commission Report for the Triennium 1982-1984.

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APPENDIX A: FORMATION OF THE COMMITTEE TO ADMINISTER JOINT PROGRAMS IN PRIORITY COUNTRY AREAS (PRIORITY COUNTRY AREA COMMITTEE)

The membership of the Committee to administer the program in Queensland was decided on by the Department of Education in consultation with the Catholic Education Office.

This membership comprised representatives of the following Departmental divisions and non-Departmental bodies and organisations:

- Divisions of - Primary Education
  - Secondary Education
  - Special Education
  - Planning and Services;
- Catholic Education Office;
- Queensland Association of Independent Schools;
- Queensland Council of State School Organisations;
- Aboriginal Consultative Committee;
- Queensland Teachers Union;
- Isolated Childrens Parents Association; and
- Schools Commission.

As well, the Co-ordinator of the Department's Special Schools Programs and the principals of its Primary and Secondary Correspondence Schools were invited to join the Committee.

The Committee was chaired by Mr C. Connell, Regional Inspector (Brisbane South Region) with secretarial assistance being provided by the Curriculum Branch, Division of Planning and Services. Towards the end of 1977, a full-time Secretary was employed through the program to act as Minute Secretary and to further the activities of the Committee between meetings.

The first meeting of the Committee was held on 1 February 1977. Altogether the Committee met 10 times during 1977. All meetings were in Brisbane with one exception - one was held at St George, a centre in one of the Priority Country Areas.

Besides participating in the normal business of meetings, Committee members were involved in:

- consultation with individuals and groups on problems confronting country children;
- preparation of submissions for a range of activities; and
- reporting to Divisional heads and organisations on activities activities of the project.

A Management Committee comprising the Chairman, the Secretary and a represenative from the Catholic Education Office was formed to act on behalf of the full Committee between meetings. As well as meeting on numerous occasions, it conferred with senior Departmental officers on various aspects of the program.

APPENDIX B: MAJOR PCAP EVENTS IN THE CENTRAL PRIORITY COUNTRY AREA PRIOR TO 1980

1977
- Informal meetings to discuss possible initiatives in the Central Area.
- Declaration of Central Area by the Minister.
- First Summer School held in Rockhampton.

1978
- Formation of Central Regional Committee.
- Extension of Roctapus, vocational reference, library updating, cultural activities and bus projects into Central Area.
- Co-ordinator appointed.
- Audio-visual maintenance service introduced in both priority areas.
- Video-cassette Resource Centre approved for Springsure.
- Mobile Classroom commenced operations.
- Camping Kit provided for Central Area schools.

1979
- Secondary Itinerant Resource Teacher Service introduced.
- Student-teacher visits to isolated families approved for funding.
- Roctapus made available to certain Rockhampton schools.
- Establishment of an audio-visual repair centre in Rockhampton approved.
- First Summer School incorporating a camp for talented children.